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Kansas Association  
of School Boards

# BOARD LEADERSHIP FIELD GUIDE

A Quick Reference Guide to Help You  
Navigate Board Meetings

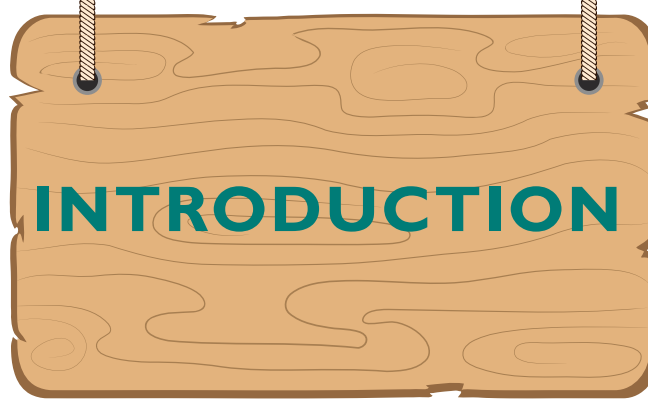


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The Board Leadership Field Guide is a publication of the Kansas Association of School Boards, 1420 SW Arrowhead Road, Topeka, KS 66604, 785-273-3600.

This publication is not intended to provide legal advice. Please consult your school attorney or KASB Legal Assistance for guidance on specific questions.



The Board Leadership Field Guide was developed as an easy-to-use quick reference for those serving as leaders of a board of education. Though it is less comprehensive than KASB's Board Leadership Handbook, it compiles the most critical information in a shorter booklet designed to sit with you at the board table as you navigate your board meetings. This is not intended to serve as a comprehensive handbook with details on every facet of board leadership. Instead, it is a resource to help you in the moment and during what can often be hectic board meetings.

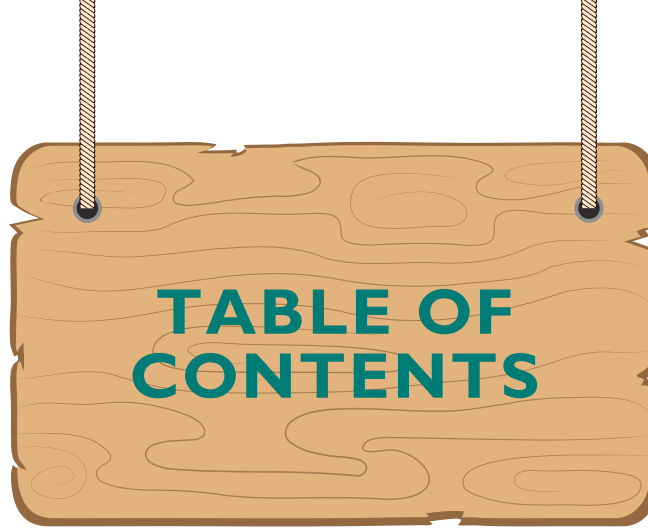
For a more detailed overview of board leadership, take advantage of our Board Leadership Handbook or register for Board Leadership Workshops throughout the year.



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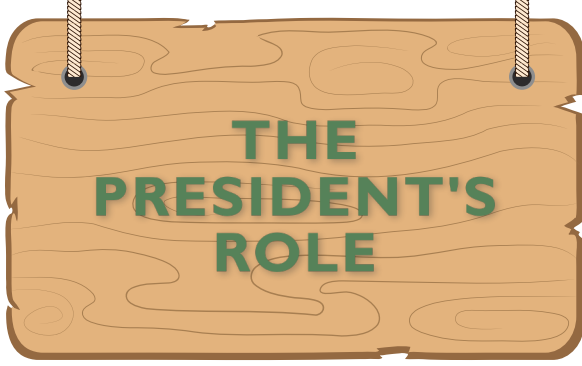
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Congratulations! As president, you have earned the challenge and responsibility of leading the board and the district it serves. As you prepare to take on the task of leading your board, it is worth noting some of the critical responsibilities you now have:

- Chair and preside over all board meetings;
- Ensure that board meetings are conducted in an orderly fashion and in accordance with district policy;
- Help plan the board agenda;
- Encourage efficient and collaborative participation during board meetings;
- Lead the board as it defines its own job and annual performance objectives
- Lead the annual reviews of the board including those pertaining to the superintendent, policies, student, outcomes, etc.;
- Support and defend the policies and programs adopted by the board;
- Lead by example;
- Keep other board members informed of pertinent information and matters;
- Make appropriate committees and liaisons;
- Seek good communication between the board, district leadership, and the community;
- Organize the work of electing officers and orienting new board members;
- Be the voice of the board in your local community.

We know, it's a lot! And that is not even the full list of leadership responsibilities. Don't worry though, serving in a leadership position does not mean you have to lead the district on your own. Remember to lean on your fellow board members, district staff, and KASB for help and support. When we collaborate, we all do a better job of leading, serving, and advocating for student success.





## Fundamental Rules and Expectations

Most boards have adopted policies regarding the rule of procedure during board meetings. The president should be sure that the policy is both understood and followed. Though voting procedures may vary slightly from board to board, the procedures from KASB sample policy BCBF are fairly standard and serve as an effective framework:

- The president will preside at all meetings. If the president is not available, the vice president will preside in their absence. In the absence of both the president and vice president, the members of the board shall elect a president pro tempore who will serve only for that meeting or for that part of the meeting in which the president and vice president are absent.
- Any member of the board who wishes to make a motion, second a motion, or to discuss pending business will first secure recognition of the board president.
- The president will present each agenda item for discussion or designate the superintendent or other staff member who will present the agenda item.
- All formal actions of the board will be taken by ordinary motions unless a formal resolution is required by law.
- It is not necessary for a motion to be before the board in order to discuss an agenda item that has been presented by the board president for consideration. In the ordinary course of events, the board will discuss all matters, other than routine procedural questions. After the making and seconding of a motion the president may facilitate a discussion to develop or promote consensus.

The following motions will be in order:

- To recess;
- To take action;
- To amend a motion to take action, but such amending motion will be disposed of before any other motion to amend the main motion will be in order;
- To defer action, either finally or to a specific time, date, and place;
- To go into executive session; and
- To adjourn, either finally or to a specific time, date, and place.







## A Motion in Action

Remember, a motion is required for most board actions and can only be made once a board member has been recognized by the board president or presiding officer. Motions might look like this:

### A Motion in Action!

Board Member 1: "President Smith, I move the board adjourn"

Board President: "We have a motion for board adjournment. Is there a second."

Board Member 2: "Second"

Board President: "The motion to adjourn has been moved and seconded. All in favor say aye."

Opposed, same sign."

- Voting Occurs -

Board President: "The ayes have it. The board is adjourned."

## Voting During Board Meetings

The law does not require voting to occur in any particular manner, but it does require:

- Binding action to be taken in an open session of a meeting;
- Four affirmative votes for the passage of any motion or resolution;
- Abstaining votes to be counted as "NO"

The Board President is entitled to the same voting rights as any other member. Voting by proxy or by secret ballots are not allowed.





## Meeting Basics

The board may change the time and/or place of a regular meeting by passing a motion to that effect prior to the change. If the board changes the time and/or place of a regular meeting, care should be taken to ensure anyone who has requested notice of meetings is informed of the change.

A quorum is required in order to have a board meeting. For school board purposes, a quorum requires four members (a majority of the full membership) to be present.

There are only two types of meetings: regular and special. Either type may be adjourned to another time and place. If a board meeting is running late or the agenda is too long to complete, a motion may be made to adjourn the meeting to a later date and time. If the board wishes to adjourn either regular or special meetings to a later time, it must adopt enabling language at the organizational meeting.

## Special Meetings

A special meeting is a meeting not regularly scheduled but held for a specific purpose(s). No other business can be conducted at the meeting except that which is stated in the notice. Therefore, the agenda for a special meeting may not be amended. Remember, a special meeting may be called by the president or by any other three board members.

If a special meeting is called, all board members must be given written notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting at least two clear days in advance. If the situation does not allow time for written notice, board members may receive oral notice and sign a waiver of the notice at the meeting. By signing the waiver, board members are waiving their right only to the two clear days notice.

Two clear days means two days, not including the day of the notice or the day of the meeting. If the meeting is called on a Tuesday, for example, two clear days would be Wednesday and Thursday with the meeting on Friday.







## Hearings

The board may hold public hearings before taking action on such issues as closing a school building, bond changes, bond elections, and other matters the board deems appropriate. Public hearings should be held at a convenient time and a suitable place.

The president or vice president of the board presides at such hearings and may request names of participants, residence, and purpose for speaking. A hearing may be part of the regular board agenda or scheduled as a special meeting. Notice of all hearings must be given in accordance with the Kansas Open Meetings Act. If the hearing is required by law, the notice must comply with the specific law authorizing the hearing.

If it appears a large number of persons or groups wish to address the board, or if the board wants a substantial amount of input on a particular topic, a special meeting should be called to conduct the hearing.

The president should speak at the beginning of the hearing to establish the ground rules. It is critical the board president be in control of any public board meeting and order be maintained. If it becomes apparent a “cooling off period” is needed, the board president should simply call a 10- or 15-minute recess. If a speaker is out of line, the president should request the person to stop and suggest a private meeting with the superintendent to resolve the matter. If it becomes necessary, the board should declare recess and leave the room.





## Pre-Hearing Statement

Before a hearing begins, the president should read a statement similar to this:

“The board appreciates patrons taking time to talk to us about USD \_\_\_\_\_ policies and procedures. We set aside this time every meeting (or, at special meetings such as this one) to hear from the public. Your comments should be directed toward board policies or the procedures administrators establish to carry out those policies.

This is not an appropriate time or place for patrons to make comments of a personal nature about any district employee or anyone else. Persons making comments that violate the privacy rights of district employees will be asked to terminate their remarks. If a patron or parent has a concern with one or more employees, the board will refer that person to the appropriate employee or the superintendent. If the board refers your concern to an administrator for investigation, the board will hear about it in a future meeting, and you can expect the superintendent or another district employee to make arrangements to meet with you at the appropriate time. Thank you again for taking time to discuss district business with the board.”





## Chairing Meetings

One of the primary responsibilities of serving as president is presiding over and chairing meetings. Some important points to consider when presiding include:

- Start on time;
- Speak to be heard by everyone;
- Welcome members and the public to the meeting;
- Follow the agenda and adhere to the adopted rules of order;
- Enforce all questions of order;
- Recognize members who wish to speak, and encourage all members to express themselves;
- Stay on task through the agenda in order to conclude the meeting in a reasonable period of time;
- Be willing to call for a motion, or table an agenda item if the conversations/deliberations have stalled or become circular in nature;
- Repeat all motions in their entirety before taking a vote;
- Call for an affirmative and negative vote on all motions;
- Announce the results of the vote and the action to be taken;
- Declare the meeting adjourned;
- Seek to conclude the meeting in a timely fashion; most board meetings should conclude in no more than two or three hours; and
- Ensure accurate minutes are kept documenting actions and official records have validating signatures.





## Executive Sessions

The board is required to have an open session prior to and after any executive session, and no binding action can be taken during an executive session. The action to go into executive session must be by formal motion, which includes:

- The subjects to be discussed during the executive session;
- The justification for the executive session; and
- The time and place at which the open meeting shall resume. Executive sessions are only allowed for the following subjects:
  - Personnel matters of non-elected personnel;
  - Consultation with an attorney for the body or agency that would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship;
  - Matters relating to employer-employee negotiations whether or not in consultation with the representative or representatives of the body or agency;
  - Confidential data relating to financial affairs or trade secrets of corporations, partnerships, trusts, and individual proprietorships;
  - Matters relating to actions adversely or favorably affecting a person as a student, patient or resident of a public institution, except any such person shall have the right to a public hearing if requested by the person;
  - Preliminary discussions relating to the acquisition of real property; and
  - Security. (See KASB recommended policy BCBK.)

Discussion in the executive session must be limited to the subject(s) stated in the motion. In some cases, the motion may include more than one subject or justification. To maintain clarity, it is best to limit the motion and the subsequent executive session to one topic at a time. However, nothing prevents a motion containing more than one subject or justification. The president must keep the executive session focused only on the information stated in the motion.

It is very important for the board to conduct the executive session for the length of time stated in the motion, no longer and no shorter. If the board needs more time, they should re-enter the open session and make a new motion to return to the executive session restating the reason and the length of time. The board should request the clerk to notify them when the time designated for the executive session has lapsed. If done early, call a recess and wait until the designated time to return to the open session.





## Executive Sessions Continued

Only board members have the absolute right to be present in an executive session. All others in attendance must be invited, including the superintendent. In nearly all cases, except during his or her evaluation, the superintendent will attend the executive session. The minutes should note who enters each executive session and the time any board members or invited guests enter or leave the executive session.

The board should only invite those who have pertinent information to present to the board. They should be dismissed from the session right after the information has been given and should not remain in the executive session during board discussion.

The clerk will generally be excluded from the executive session but must be present to record the motion for going into the executive session and the time at which the board reconvenes in the open session. If necessary, the clerk may be invited into executive session to provide information to the board, then leave.

### When Can We Go Into Executive Session?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Non-elected personnel	Matters of attorney-client privilege	Actions affecting a student	Financial or trade secret data	Employer-Employee Negotiations	Discussion of Property Purchase	School Security Matters





## Understanding the Differences

There are many types of meetings and settings in which you and the board of education will find yourself. Below, we have summarized the four main settings: Board Meetings, Special Meetings, Hearings, and Executive Sessions. Understanding the differences between these four types of meetings and when each is appropriate is critical as you seek to lead your fellow board members.

### Understand the Difference

<b>Board Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scheduled at the annual organizational meeting</li><li>• Must be held at least once a month, though more frequent meetings are allowed</li><li>• Requires a quorum of four members</li><li>• Conducts the regular business of the board</li></ul>	<b>Special Meeting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be called by the president or any three board members</li><li>• Requires written notice to all members with two clear days in advance</li><li>• Can only conduct the business stated in the notice</li><li>• The agenda cannot be amended</li></ul>
<b>Executive Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only for board members and other invited guests</li><li>• Restricted to certain topics of conversation including: non-elected personnel, matters of attorney-client privilege, actions affecting a student, financial or trade secrets, employer-employee negotiations, discussion of property purchases, and safety.</li></ul>	<b>Hearings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May be held before taking action on such issues as closing a school building, bond changes, bond elections, and other matters the board deems appropriate</li><li>• Can be held as part of a special meeting</li><li>• Restricted to only the topic at hand, not the work of a regular board meeting</li></ul>







## Handling Public Participation

Here are some helpful, quick tips for public commentary:

- At the start of the meeting, the board president should remind patrons of expectations of conduct that the board will follow along with those in attendance;
- The board president should remind patrons that it is the board's meeting held in a public setting. Public participation in the meeting is allowed but not a right;
- Remind those in attendance to be respectful of people presenting and board members as they discuss/deliberate the issues and topics;
- This specifically means that any comments or actions that are disrespectful of presenters or disruptive to the board's discussion/deliberations will result in immediate removal from the meeting:
  - Law enforcement can be on hand for all board meetings;
  - Procedurally if disruptions and/or disrespectful actions occur, the board president should immediately recess the meeting until the person(s) can be removed.
- Once the person(s) have been removed, the meeting can be called back to order.

Consider adopting KASB Policy BCBI, which includes:

- Specifications on who may speak at public commentary, time limits, appointing a spokesperson and when board members can interact with speakers;
- When patrons may request agenda items and how it is either handled internally or put on the board meeting agenda;
- The situations in which a superintendent may refer complaints to the board;
- A sample form for patrons to fill out to speak.





## WORKING WITH THE BOARD

### The Organizational Meeting

The organizational meeting requires special planning by the clerk, board president, and superintendent. Following are some tasks to consider when planning the agenda for the organizational meeting:

- At the organizational meeting, you may wish to elect board leadership, if that was not done at an earlier meeting. The president from the previous year may chair the meeting. If the president is absent, the vice president performs this duty. If neither is present, the board should select a member to conduct the meeting until a new president is elected;
- Appoint the clerk, treasurer, KPERS representative, foodservice program representative, district attendance officers, and compliance coordinator for district nondiscrimination policies and for federal programs;
- Make other appointments, such as representatives to the service center board, school board attorney, deputy-clerk and other necessary appointments;
- Pass a resolution for the following:
  - to establish regular meeting dates and to allow adjourned meetings;
  - to rescind all policy actions established during the previous year;
  - to adopt all current written policies;
  - to establish petty cash accounts; and
  - to establish school activity accounts.
- Select the official district newspaper;
- Select official depositories for school district funds and review bank signatures on file;
- Adopt the annual waiver of requirements for generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP – KASB policy);
- Adopt a school calendar and designate inclement weather make-up days (snow days) if the board wants them;
- Adopt early payment request policy K.S.A. 12-105b(e);
- Approve any amendments to the teacher and administrator evaluation documents;
- Authorize the use of home rule powers; and
- Establish:
  - student fees;
  - meal prices; and
  - the reimbursement rate for mileage.



# WORKING WITH THE BOARD

## Dealing with Conflict

Conflict naturally occurs within a group that has different values, interests, and points of view. Unresolved conflict can tear the board apart. A board will experience conflict of various types:

- Disagreements over what problems are most important;
- Differences about how to accomplish the board's goals;
- Feelings of rejection by one or more members;
- Desires of members to push their personal agenda; and
- Confusion about whose opinions are most valued.

Unless the conflict is managed in some way, it will produce ongoing problems. The president must help the board see and deal with conflicts as they arise. When the board successfully tackles a tough situation, it will emerge healthier and stronger than when it fails to recognize and work on conflict issues.

Change and conflict go hand-in-hand. Conflict changes a situation; the status quo continues it. There is a direct correlation between the rate of change in a school system and the amount of conflict. The faster the change, the more conflict can be expected.

Conflict resolution skills can be learned. The basic steps are outlined below:

- Recognize that conflict exists: Admit there might be a problem- don't ignore it; it is not going away;
- Diagnose the problem: Find out as much as possible about what is happening, who is involved, who feels the strongest, and if the disagreement is over goals (end results) or if it is over how to accomplish the goals (means);
- Identify the individual needs or wants: Each person who is involved must have a clear idea of what the others involved want; and
- Identify areas of agreement: More attention to possibilities lessens energy wasted on the problem.

The key to making conflict work for the good of the board is to remember that conflict, like other problems, is solvable. When the president acts as if this were true, it tends to happen. Possibilities are more exciting than problems, and more effective, too. There are more than two possibilities in most situations. The more possible solutions the board can think of, the better its chance of finding one that is acceptable. The important thing is not whether there is conflict because there will be, but how it is resolved.





## Board Self-Evaluation

The board can profit from an examination of how well it is fulfilling its role. If the review occurs only when board members run for re-election, there is no process for improving the board's effectiveness. Evaluation is an effective tool for the board to use to examine how well it is functioning. Self-evaluation should be the system by which the board agrees on what it is to do and then decides how well it is performed.

Various forms of evaluation are available, and the board also might consider hiring a facilitator to assist it with its evaluation. KASB instruments and services are available to support self-evaluation processes. Each board should choose the evaluation format that best fits its situation.

A designated time must be set aside for board self-evaluation, and the president must ensure it is conducted. Otherwise, there never will be time enough for it, and other things will seem more important.



# WORKING WITH LEADERSHIP

## Evaluating the Superintendent

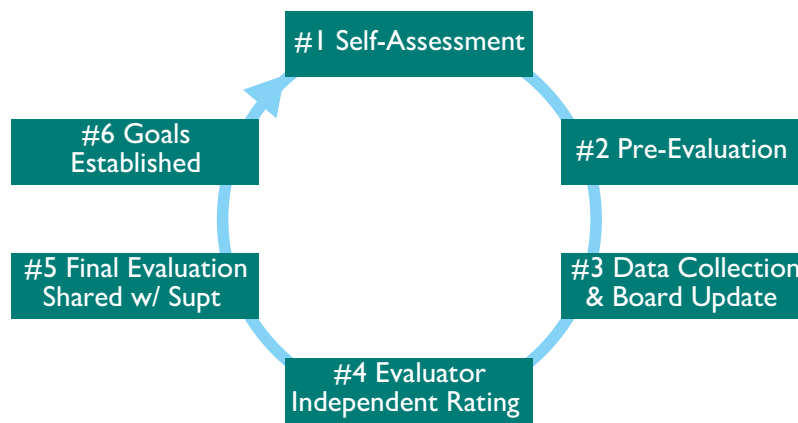
Regular, formal evaluations offer boards the best means of assessing the superintendent's total performance and are a legal requirement. Conducted properly they benefit the school district by:

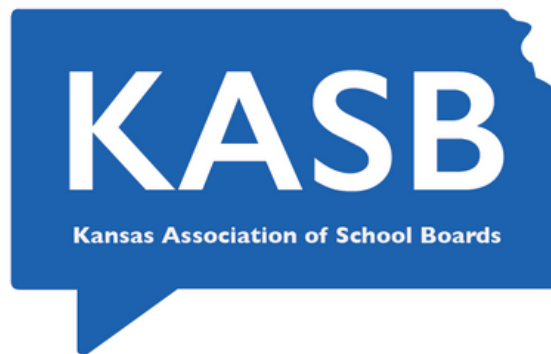
- Enhancing the superintendent's effectiveness;
- Assuring the board its policies are being carried out;
- Clarifying for the superintendent and individual board members the responsibilities the board relies on him or her to fulfill; and
- Strengthening the working relationship between board and superintendent.

Boards must commit themselves to the belief all individuals can improve if given the opportunity to do so. This commitment should take the form of a written policy.

KASB has developed helpful guides for evaluating all school district staff, including the superintendent. The following major areas of performance should be considered in the evaluation process:

- Educational leadership,
- Student achievement,
- Financial management,
- Property management,
- Public relations,
- Staff relations/supervision,
- Achievement of personal and professional goals, and
- Relationship with the board and individual board members.





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